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Burr Combs

Burrs that Stick—In the Sand of the Southwest

By M. G. Dadant.

You know, Pellett took a long trip through the southwest last winter. And he came back home with a glowing account, not particularly of the country and climate, but of the beekeepers he met down there.

He said, in spite of boll weevil, reduction in cotton production and restriction in acreage of alfalfa and sweet clover, and an extremely dry season, still the beekeepers were **looking forward** and were far from a discouraged bunch.

Now, that's all right to tell, second hand, when you've been browsing in the sunshine of sandy Arizona and rounding out on three square meals at the expense of some good beekeeper (accidentally taken in by Pellett's good looks rather than by his conversation or his reputation).

But, frankly, this didn't set as "all wool and a yard wide" with us up here in the snow and sleet, with the temperature at zero, and the poor bees afraid to change position for fear they'd be rolled to the outside of the cluster to chill to the bone—if bees have bones. You know I can sympathize with the poor bee that has to take her turn at becoming the periphery of the winter cluster. I've sat in front of a fireplace just enough to know that you can feel blamed uncomfortable to have your fat side sizzling near the blaze, while your lean side is, metaphorically, with

MacMillan in Ellsmere land. Our older readers may know exactly how it feels from the fireplace days.

No, sir, we didn't believe the half of what Pellett said in his lucid moments about those fellows in the southwest. But one day I got disillusioned. You know I send market questions every month to a number of beekeepers in that territory as well as elsewhere. H. S. Robinson, of Old Albuquerque, one month answered on his card as follows:

1. Condition of bees—Short of honey.
2. Condition of plants—Need rain badly.
3. Crop so far—None.
4. Carry over of honey—Sold out.
5. Probable crop—Uncertain.

A pretty discouraging outlook—what?

But Robinson was not a bit down-hearted—not he. Here's what he jotted down under "Remarks" at the tail-end of the card, just as a parting shot to show the optimism of the great southwest:

"I eat my beans with honey,
I've done it all my life;
It tastes a little funny,
But it holds them on my knife."

That card of his came in May. I've kept it on my desk ever since. Whenever work gets heavy, the weather

bad, or I'm discouraged otherwise that card sort of renews the old spark of go-to-it-iveness.

Why, I've even got to the point where, every time we have beans at home, my wife has to call me down for a too liberal use of the knife. It's easy to see Robinson doesn't extract his honey till it's ripe. Thin honey won't work that way. I know because I've tried.

And the beauty of it is that Robinson only epitomizes the general attitude of the wide southwest. We've Pellett's word for it that Crawford, Collier, Powell, Benson, Gunter, Slease, Hadsell and all the rest of them are of that temperament too.

But after all, don't they just show the attitude of beekeepers in general? Did you ever hear of a beekeeper who wasn't looking forward to the good crop just ahead, forgetting the past failures?

Yes, I'll admit that maybe that's why we, as beekeepers, don't pay the attention we should to our market problems; the reason why honey is now selling at the pro rata price of two pounds per person in the country.

But after all—why worry?

If we've got beans, honey, a knife and a little imagination, can't we oftentimes make a happy moment out of a trying situation?

